

2020 Fall Ministry at LCOOR During COVID-19

Adopted by Church Council on August 11, 2020

Our Faith Perspective

- As God's people, we live not as isolated individuals but as community. The biblical image of the church is "one body, many members" (1 Corinthians 12:12).
- The Christian faith always has its view set on "care for one another". In fact, the phrase "one another" occurs no less than 35 times in the New Testament. As in, love one another, pray for one another, bear the burdens with one another, serve one another.
- Jesus said the greatest commandment is "Love God, love one another."
- In this COVID-19 pandemic, it is our Christian mandate to do it better than the schools, businesses and other organizations, when it comes to doing what's best for everyone, because we have a far different mission.

Therefore, as we return to public worship and start our fall ministries, we encourage extra caution – not out of fear but out of concern for our neighbor. Our Christian focus is "others above self". This is not the American way, but it is the Christian way. To wear a mask and keep physically distanced is a minor inconvenience. And, we do this out of love. We do this out of concern for those who may have health problems. We do this to keep in mind that we, our self, may not get very sick if we contract Coronavirus, but we might expose grandpa or grandma (or an older member of the church), and they might get deathly sick.

For the safety of all – masks are not required but strongly suggested. Physical distancing is likewise strongly suggested.

Worship

- Go back to usual times the weekend of September 19 – 20, with physically spaced pew seating in sanctuary, approximately 150. Overflow will be in Gathering Space, with chairs spaced out.
- We will live stream the 8:30 worship (and could do this for the 10:30 and Wednesday 6:30 worship if needed) and continue to do this even beyond COVID.
- No congregational singing. We will have 2 or 3 song leaders for 10:30; and physically spaced worship team lead for 8:30 Sunday and 6:30 PM Wednesday.
- Holy Communion elements will be handed to worshipers as they arrive.
- Bulletins and offering plates will be in the Gathering Space on a table.
- Pastors and ministry staff will not be shaking hands but will wear masks and safely talk with people distanced. Pastors will be outside to greet people, as weather permits.
- To minimize movement and close contact, there will be no children's sermons, children's church or quiet bags. Families may bring quiet activities for kids from home.

Meals: Food and Drink

The following events provide regular meals at the church: Saturday worship (1st Saturday of the month); high school lunch, Tuesday noons; Men's Lunch and Study, Wednesday noons; Wednesday Night meal 5 – 6 PM during the school year; funeral lunch – following funerals, the ladies order sandwich fixings and recruit cakes from parishioners.

There will be no meals served at this time. Church council will revisit this decision each month.

Confirmation

As we have done in the past, we will have 2 weeks with parents prior to starting with students. September 16 is with parents, to go through confirmation requirements and procedures. Sept. 23 is with parent leaders on how to lead small group faith discussions. September 30 we begin with students.

- 7th and 8th Graders will meet in a large group in the sanctuary for the pastor's teaching. They will be spread out, according to the COVID seating arrangement. And for the safety of all, masks are suggested.
- Small groups of kids with 1 parent leader will do discussion and Bible study in Sunday School rooms, with doors remaining open for air flow.
- Pastors will visit each room, as in the past, but will remain at the door and wear a mask.
- The closing blessing will be done, standing at the baptismal font, with each student making the sign of the cross on their own forehead and saying the usual words of blessing
- The large group teaching by the pastor will be live streamed for those families not comfortable to have their child in the sanctuary. The lesson and discussion questions, to be completed by parent and student, will be available on the church website. Parents will indicate on their child's registration form, whether they will choose in-person or online.

Music Groups – Meetings with these groups happen outdoors on August 18 & 19, to discuss who is comfortable with what activities.

- Based on CDC guidelines, the large Praise and Rejoice Choir will likely not start until a vaccine arrives. In their place, we will try to find people to sing in small groups, physically distanced.
- Bell Choir likely will meet, if they feel comfortable to be together to ring. (They may get matching face masks!)
- Worship teams – we have 3 worship teams and we hopefully will be able to have a smaller worship team, working together to lead music in worship. Again, as they feel comfortable and physically spaced out, as much as possible.

We still have some details to work out regarding location for rehearsals – as they all meet Wednesday evenings.

Sunday School and Wednesday School

These will start Sunday, Sept. 20 and Wednesday, Sept. 23.

- Class sizes will be limited to a maximum of 10 people in a room (9 students +1 teacher).
- As students and teachers arrive, they will be given hand sanitizer to apply and encouraged to wear masks.
- There will be no music/singing and kids are expected to keep as safely distanced as possible.
- The class will last 45 minutes or less.
- Students are asked to not share crayons, pencils, etc.
- As weather permits, especially on Wednesdays, classes are welcome to play outside, when their Bible lesson is completed.

Note: Particularly for Wednesday activities, we ask families to please not drop off their children to their event early, and rather, arrive at the scheduled time.

High School Youth Group

With 20 – 40 typically in attendance, we will encourage the youth group to be in the largest space possible for their events and to abide by food, mask and physical distancing guidelines set by the Church Council.

LCOOR Preschool

Because of increased enrollment and concern for safety, school year 2020-21 will have a morning and afternoon session, with 12-14 students in each.

- As in the past, the preschool schedule will follow the patterns of the Watertown public school.
- Teachers will model safety procedures (masks, hand sanitizer and physical distancing) as much as possible.
- Preschool families will be asked to have the child stay home if they are ill and immediately notify the teacher if someone in their family gets a positive COVID test.
- Custodial staff and teachers will work together to clean and sanitize at the conclusion of each day. If there are two daily sessions, teachers will need to use the sanitizing fogger.
- CDC indicates children under the age of 9 do not spread the virus as badly as older people, thus giving us a bit more freedom to have a larger group.

Other groups that meet at the church: quilters, prayer shawls group, Book Club, W-ELCA, AI Anon, etc.:

- Each group should decide on their norms, regarding face masks and physical distancing. With older people, they may decide to require masks and 6 ft separation for all participants.
- These groups are encouraged to abide by LCOOR guidelines regarding food and size of gatherings.
- At this time, we are not allowing any additional outside groups to use the facility.

Funerals and weddings will be asked to maintain the same guidelines as above, regarding food, physical distancing and masks.

Cleaning

We have a very good custodial staff, but they cannot be here all the time cleaning after each group. Of particular concern is how to adequately clean pews and other areas for quick turn-around events. The sanitizer fogger will be used when possible. We will make available hand sanitizer and wipes outside the sanctuary and in the church school areas.

These guidelines will be revisited as the response to the virus requires. We hope and pray for a vaccine and the eradication of this virus to happen quickly. We pray for the unity of our congregation and nation, as we seek to live out our mission as God's people.